

*The Appearing of Christ the Chief Shepherd
considered and improved,*

25

I N A

S E R M O N

OCCASIONED

By the much lamented DEATH of the
Rev. Mr. SAMUEL SANDERSON,

Pastor of the Dissenting Congregation at BEDFORD:

Who departed this Life, *January 24, 1766.*

Preached at *Bedford*, after the Interment, *January 29, 1766.*

By SAMUEL PALMER.

Published at the Request of the Congregation, and other
Friends of the Deceased.

*And they all wept sore—sorrowing most of all—that they
should see his face no more.*

Acts, xx. 37, 38.

*I am he that liveth, and was dead, and behold I am alive for
evermore.*

Rev. i. 18.

L O N D O N:

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W. Musgrave



TO THE
Society of Protestant Dissenters
at *Bedford*.

Christian Friends and Brethren,

WHEN I consider my late connexions with you as a member of your Church, as well as a native of your town, and the agreeable acquaintance I have with many of you still, I know not how to refuse your request, (in which many friends here concur) to publish the Sermon which I preached at the funeral of your late worthy Pastor; especially as he was one with whom I enjoyed a friendship, which I esteem one of the greatest felicities of my life, and which I shall think of with pleasure and gratitude to the latest period of it; to whom therefore I must consider myself as under the strongest obligations to pay every possible piece of respect: *This*, indeed, is but a small one, but it is the last I shall ever be able to pay him; and I hope it will be interpreted by all his friends as well meant, however inconsiderable.

This plain discourse, I am sensible, is not calculated for the entertainment of polite and critical

DEDICATION.

tical readers, nor do I much regret it that it is not: It is more immediately designed for you, who are chiefly interested in the mournful providence which occasioned it, and who, I well know, will not esteem it the less on account of its plainness; as you always loved, and have been always used to hear, the plain doctrines of the Gospel, delivered in a plain manner, without those human ornaments, which tend more to please the fancy, than to enlighten the judgment, or to mend the heart. Let me entreat your prayers that what I lately delivered to you from the pulpit, and now repeat from the press, may be accompanied with a divine blessing, for reviving the serious impressions that might be made on the minds of any who heard it--for making such on others who may now read it, who either heard it not, or heard it in vain---and for promoting, in some respect or other, the advantage of you all. These are the fervent prayers of one who sincerely wishes you well in every respect, particularly in the settlement of another minister, and who cheerfully subscribes, and will be ever ready to approve himself,

Your affectionate Friend,



And obedient Servant,

For JESUS' Sake,

HACKNEY,
March 4, 1766.

SAMUEL PALMER.

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS

TO THE

A U D I E N C E.

I CANNOT suppose that any in this numerous assembly need to be informed on what occasion I appear among you this night. You are all too well acquainted with that mournful providence which has deprived the world of an useful member of society—this town of a worthy inhabitant—and this church of a faithful pastor. Most of you, I doubt not, are deeply affected with this awful event; and many of you, at least, are now come to this house of mourning with a sincere desire of improving it for the best of purposes. God grant that your ends may be fully answered! Be assured, it is of vast importance that an event of this solemn nature be duly attended to by us all; especially by the members of this church. And I hope I need not tell you, that it is capable of being improved for the most valuable purposes. Death is a very instructive monitor. The common lessons it teaches are many and important: But those that may be learnt when it calls Ministers from their stations of usefulness in the christian church, are more numerous; and more affecting. What those lessons are, it is my business (by the help of God) now to shew. You might naturally have expected a person better qualified

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than

than myself to have undertaken this painful office; and I could wish, on some accounts, that a senior minister had been fixed upon for it: But since it was left with me by the deceased himself, I hope I need not so far distrust your candor as to ask it, while I direct your serious meditations to a passage of scripture which will furnish us with some thoughts not unsuitable to the present melancholy occasion: You will find it in

I PETER, V. 4.

And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

IF you examine the preceding context, you will find that these words were addressed to ministers of the gospel, or, as they are here called, elders; in order to encourage them in the faithful discharge of their duty. The apostle Peter, after he had instructed those christian converts to whom his epistle is directed, and exhorted them to the performance of all the duties which their respective characters and circumstances required, proceeds, in the *fifth* chapter, to address himself to his brethren in the ministry, and gives *them* also the word of exhortation. ‘The elders which are among you (says he) I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ.’ His exhortation is this: ‘Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof;’ or, performing the work of bishops: ‘Not by constraint,’ as if it were a painful burden, ‘but willingly; not for filthy lucre,’ or from that detestable principle of desiring to enrich or aggrandize yourselves, ‘but with a ready mind;’ believing that yours is an honourable and an useful employment. ‘Neither, (says he) as being Lords over God’s heritage’—not desiring to usurp dominion over the property, much

much less over the consciences of your brethren, 'but ensamples to the flock'—patterns of every thing becoming a christian character. As a motive to enforce this pertinent exhortation, the apostle adds the words of my text—'and when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.'

From these words we may gather the following observations;

- I. That the ministers of the gospel sustain the character of *Shepherds*.
- II. That *Christ Jesus*, the great head of the church, is the *chief Shepherd*.
- III. That *Christ* the chief Shepherd will one day *appear*. And
- IV. That on that happy day, his faithful ministers shall receive a *crown of glory* that fadeth not away.

The first of these propositions is implied, and the rest are contained, in the words of the text. I shall beg leave to suggest a few thoughts on each of them in their order, and then point out the improvement of the whole.

The 1st observation which presents itself to us from the text, is, that the ministers of the gospel sustain the character of *shepherds*.

This is necessarily implied in the text itself, where, in relation to ministers, Christ is styled the chief Shepherd; and it is more fully expressed in the verses preceding, in which they are exhorted to feed the *flock*, and to be ensamples to the *flock*: which expressions evidently allude to the business of shepherds, and give us an idea of ministers as sustaining an office analogous to theirs; which therefore is commonly called the Pastoral office. The ministers of religion are sometimes spoken of as Watchmen—as Labourers in the Lord's vineyard—

as Ambassadors of God, sent to negotiate a peace with men: But there is no similitude which more justly represents their office, or sets it in a more agreeable light, than that of a *shepherd*. We find them therefore, in the sacred writings, frequently called by this name. When God promised, by the prophet Jeremiah, to restore the Jews after their dispersion, he expressed himself thus: ‘ And I will ‘ set up *shepherds* over them which shall feed ‘ them *.’ Paul, in his exhortation to the Ephesian Elders at *Miletus*, says—‘ Take heed to yourselves, and all the *flock* †.’ And our Lord, in his charge to *Peter*, (which certainly is addressed to all his ministers) uses the same allegorical form of speech—‘ Feed my sheep—and feed my lambs ‡.’

The Flock which is committed to the care of ministers, is, the Church of Christ—that church which he is said to have ‘ purchased with his own ‘ blood §.’ The whole congregation, indeed, to which they preach is the object of their care; but the Church, i. e. the persons who are received into communion, are their peculiar charge; With respect to both these, especially the latter, they are styled Pastors, or Shepherds. The propriety of which similitude will appear from the following particulars.

- i. The ministers of Christ, like good shepherds, are acquainted with the state of their flocks.

I need not say how necessary a part of the shepherd’s character this is; nor is it less obvious how requisite a branch this is of the christian minister’s office. In order to discharge his duty with fidelity, and to address himself with propriety to the several cases and characters of his hearers, it is necessary,

* Jer. xxiii. 4.

† Acts xx. 28.

‡ John xxi. 15.

§ Acts xx, 28.

that he should know what their respective cases and characters are. He must be acquainted with the temptations to which they are exposed—the sins that most easily beset them—the disorders under which they labour—the snares into which they have fallen—the afflictions with which they are exercised,—the sorrows by which they are oppressed—and the several circumstances relative to them which may require his advice, his reproof, his consolations, or his prayers. In order to attain such a knowledge as this, the faithful minister will make a diligent, frequent, but prudent enquiry; not merely for his own information, but for his people's benefit; that he may be able to give ‘to every one their portion in due season *.’

2. Christian ministers act the part of shepherds in providing for their flocks Food convenient for them.

The ordinances of God's house are the pastures into which they lead them; of which the Psalmist gives this beautiful description: ‘He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, he leadeth me by the still waters †.’—Here ministers dispense ‘the heavenly manna, and the water of life,’ for the support, the refreshment, and the entertainment of their people's souls. Here they break to them ‘the bread of life,’ and distribute it according to their respective necessities: Here they open to them ‘the wells of salvation,’ to quench their spiritual thirst,—those fountains of joy and consolation which flow from *Christ*, ‘the rock of ages,’ of whom the apostle tells us, ‡ that rock was a type which *Moses* smote in the wilderness, from which waters gushed out, and attended the Israelites in their journey. Faithful shepherds will not starve their

* Luke, xii. 42.

† Ps. xxiii. 2.

‡ 1 Cor. x. 4.

flocks

flocks with the flowers of Rhetorick, with the dry husks of Criticism, or with the briars and thorns of Controversy, but will feed them with that plain, substantial food, which Christ has provided in the gospel, which is so well adapted to their spiritual appetites, with which 'those that hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled,' and by which they will grow in faith, in knowledge, in holiness and in comfort; and, as our Lord expresses it, 'shall be nourished up unto eternal life.'

3. Christian ministers, like faithful shepherds, carefully *watch* over their flocks, to defend them from the dangers to which they are exposed.

The churches of Christ are exposed to many dangers, because they are surrounded with many enemies. Satan is spoken of just after our text, as their grand 'adversary, who goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour *.' And wicked, malicious men are often employed as his agents, to do all the mischief in the church that lies in their power; whom our Lord, therefore, calls 'thieves and robbers.' But none are capable of greater mischief than false teachers, (for whom these appellations were more especially intended) who assume the garb, and mimic the voice of the shepherd, to make a more easy prey of the flock. Concerning these our blessed Saviour prophesied, saying, 'many false prophets shall arise and deceive many †;' and elsewhere, 'they come in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves ‡.' Against such persons as these the apostle Paul guarded the Ephesian church: 'I know (says he) that after my departing, shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock: Also

* Ver. 8.

† Matt. xxiv. 11.

‡ Ch. vii. 15.

‘ of your own selves shall men arise, speaking
‘ perverse things, to draw away disciples after
‘ them *.’ Such evil designing men—such wolves
in sheep’s clothing, there always have been in the
christian church; and such there are to this day †,
from whom its members are not without danger.

Now it is the faithful pastor’s business to keep a
diligent watch over his flock—to acquaint them
with ‘ the wiles of the Devil,’ that they may not
be ‘ ignorant of his devices;’ and to preserve
them from being infected with the pernicious errors
of deceitful men, and from being seduced into the
evil courses of the wicked.—Yes, and he will care-
fully endeavour also, to keep them, or to reclaim
them, from those devious and dangerous paths into
which, of themselves, they are prone to wander—
those crooked ways of error and of sin—to keep them
together in the bonds of unity and peace—to pre-
serve among them that order, regularity, and bro-
therly love, which are so ornamental to a christian
profession, and so characteristic of Christ’s genuine
disciples.—Thus they ‘ watch for souls as those
‘ that must give an account ‡.’

4. The faithful minister acts the part of a shep-
herd, in that he not only takes care of the
flock in general, but is peculiarly attentive to
the cases of those that need his especial assist-
ance.

Being acquainted with the state of his whole
flock, he makes it his business to suit himself to
the necessities of each individual member of it.
He endeavours to reclaim those that wander—to re-
cover those that have fallen into the snares of the

* Acts, xx. 29.

† The Author intends not in the least to reflect on any
particular denomination of Protestants.

‡ Heb. xiii. 17.

Devil—to establish those that are wavering—to resolve those that are doubting—to comfort those that mourn—to relieve those that are in want—to visit those that are sick. He exercises great tenderness in cases that require it—in dealing with the aged and infirm; and conducts himself with peculiar gentleness and affection towards the young—whether children in age, or in knowledge, grace, and experience, who are the *lambs* of the flock. Once more,

5. The ministers of Christ, may be said to resemble shepherds, because, like them, they walk before their flocks, to guide them where they would have them go.

It is observable that Sheep were not usually driven, like other animals, but that the shepherd used to lead them wherever he would have them go, by walking before his flock. Our Lord therefore, in his description of the good shepherd, says—
 ‘ When he putteth forth his own sheep, *he goeth before them*, and they follow him, for they know *his voice* *.’ The application is easy: a good example is more forcible than good advice, and is necessary to recommend it. The apostle, therefore, in the verse before our text, exhorts the Elders to be ‘ *ensamples to the flock.*’ This advice faithful ministers will conscientiously regard. Sensible that it is not enough for them to tell their hearers from the pulpit, what they must be and do, they endeavour to teach it them by their own behaviour. According to Paul’s exhortation to Timothy, they ‘ *take heed to themselves as well as their doctrine,*’ and strive to ‘ *become examples of the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity* †;’ making it their business ever

* John, x. 4. See Ps. lxxvij. 20. lxxx. 1.

† 2 Tim. iv. 12.

to act (as they exhort their people to do) under the influence of that ‘ wisdom which is from above, ‘ which is first pure, and then peaceable, gentle ‘ and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good ‘ fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy ;’ that thus they may be able to say to the people of their charge—‘ be ye followers of us.’ —Such, in a few words, is the character of a faithful minister, and on these accounts may such an one be stiled a shepherd.—You have anticipated the application of these several particulars—for you could not hear them without reflecting—that *such* a pastor had *you*.—Happy the church that is under the care of such a shepherd—Thrice happy are *all* the churches—for they are under the care of one greater than he whose loss you now deplore—one who sustains a far higher character, and who is far better qualified to execute the charge of them, than any—yes, than *all* of the wisest and ablest pastors that God ever placed over them. They are under the care of CHRIST himself, whom we are now led, in the second place,

II. To consider as the *chief Shepherd*.

CHRIST JESUS himself has condescended to stand in the relation of a *Shepherd* to the church. Under this character he was foretold by the prophets long before his incarnation; particularly by the prophet *Isaiab*, who says concerning him, ‘ he ‘ shall feed his flock like a *shepherd*.’ The apostle *Peter* stiles him ‘ the shepherd and bishop of ‘ souls.’ And he himself, speaking of his own character and offices, says of himself, ‘ I am the ‘ good *shepherd*.’ In our text he is stiled ‘ the ‘ *chief shepherd* :’ In which epithet we may suppose the apostle to refer either to his peculiar qualifications for that office, and his superiority to his

ministers in it—or to his authority over them, to whose immediate inspection he has committed the care of his flock. In both these views it is with propriety that Christ is stiled the chief shepherd: Let us therefore briefly attend to both.

1. Our blessed Lord may here be called the chief shepherd, in reference to his superiority over his ministering servants.

How able and faithful soever ministers may be, in all respects *Christ* must have the pre-eminence. ‘ Him hath God highly exalted, and given him a name above every name, that at the name of *Jesus* every knee should bow.’ He is said to be ‘ constituted head over all things to the church.’ And therefore it is that the apostle to the *Hebrews* stiles him——‘ that *great* shepherd of the sheep*.’

Christ has a peculiar and exclusive *property* in the sheep. As for ministers, they are but servants under him. Therefore, says the apostle *Paul*, ‘ let a man so account of us as ministers (or servants) of Christ †:’ but as for *him*, the church is his *own*,——he ‘ purchased it with his own blood. We all, like sheep, were going astray, but are now returned to him, the shepherd of souls, being redeemed not with such corruptible things as silver and gold, but by the precious blood of Christ;’ who says of himself, ‘ I lay down my life for the she.p ‡.’ God has accepted the ransom he gave for them, hath committed them into his hands, and entrusted him to his care: ‘ Thine they were (says he) and thou gavest them me §.’

Again; Christ is the chief shepherd, because he is peculiarly *qualified* for that office. As for ministers, they are but men——‘ men of like passions

* Heb. xiii. 20.

† 1 Cor. iv. 1.

‡ John, x. 15.

§ xvii. 6.

‘ with yourselves :’ But Christ is emphatically stiled the Son of God ; whom God calls ‘ my shepherd ;’ and whom, at the same time, he addresseth as ‘ the ‘ man my fellow *.’—Ministers, with what ever gifts they are endowed, are but weak and helpless men ; incapable of defending themselves, and much more of defending their people, from the dangers and the enemies that may assault them : But Christ is possessed of almighty strength, against which the powers neither of earth nor hell can prevail ; and therefore he had sufficient ground to say of his people, ‘ they shall never perish, neither shall any ‘ pluck them out of my hands †.’—Ministers, how bright soever their intellectual powers, are comparatively very ignorant and unskilful—liable to be deceived themselves, and therefore liable (though unwillingly) to deceive others : but ‘ Christ ‘ is the wisdom’ as well as ‘ power of God ; in ‘ him are laid up the treasures of knowledge and ‘ understanding.’ As he cannot err himself, he will not—he cannot lead his people astray. Ministers are often unacquainted with the peculiar trials and necessities of their flocks : But Christ is intimately acquainted with them all ; and therefore he hath said, ‘ I know my sheep.’ There is no circumstance belonging to the meanest of them of which he is ignorant ; nor can any possible case happen in which he knows not how to act. Ministers are often ignorant of the disease, and oftener of the remedy, but Christ the skilful shepherd is perfectly acquainted with both. In short, ‘ it has ‘ pleased the Father that in him should *all* fulness ‘ dwell.’ Let me add,

Christ is not only superior to others in his qualifications for his office, but in his *faithfulness* and *success* in it. Even in the best of ministers there are

* Zec xiii. 7.

† John, x. 28.

too many sad deficiencies, which they freely own and seriously lament: They are far from being so diligent, so faithful, so compassionate as they ought to be: But Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, ever employs his watchful eye over them——has a most tender regard for their welfare——and is ever diligent to promote it. Even the weakest among the lambs of his flock he will preserve from the mouth of the lion: ‘Of all that the Father hath given him he will lose nothing,’ but will faithfully keep what is committed to his trust. He will defend his people from every fatal evil——he will supply them with every needful good——and not the meanest or most unworthy among them shall have reason to complain of hard treatment or neglect. The prophet *Isaiab*, in that remarkable passage before referred to, prophesied concerning him in the following expressive words: ‘He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, he shall gather the lambs in his arm, he shall carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young*.’ This character does the blessed Jesus abundantly fulfil. His watchful eyes are ever employed for their safety, for ‘the shepherd of *Israel* never slumbers nor sleeps.’ That love which brought him from the throne to the cross, for his people’s sake, will engage him to bestow upon them all the necessary supplies of his grace here, and to crown all with glory hereafter. He has promised to ‘give unto his sheep eternal life.’ He will safely conduct them all through this wilderness, by his providence and by his spirit, and will lead them to the paradise of God, where they shall be free from every danger, and secure in the possession of every blessing; for there ‘is fulness of joy——there rivers of pleasure flow for ever more.’

* *Is. xl. 11.*

Happy they that are under the Redeemer's conduct!—thrice 'happy the people who are in 'such a case!' Well may they exult and triumph in the language of holy David—even when their earthly pastors are removed from them and laid in the dust—'The LORD is my shepherd, I shall 'not want: He maketh me to lie down in green 'pastures, and leadeth me beside the still waters: 'he restoreth my soul, he leadeth me in the paths 'of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though 'I walk through the valley of the shadow of death 'I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod 'and thy staff they comfort me *.'—But further,

2. When the apostle styles our Lord the *chief* shepherd, he may be supposed to refer to his *authority* over ministers, as well as his superiority to them.

Though ministers are called shepherds as well as he, they are but *under-shepherds*—employed by him—subject to his authority—and entirely at his disposal. Even the apostles themselves taught their hearers to conceive of them, not as Lords and Masters, who had a right to claim dominion over their faith, but as the servants of Christ, and as the servants of all men for his sake. 'We 'preach not *ourselves*' (says the great apostle of the Gentiles) 'but *Christ Jesus* the Lord, and *ourselves* your servants for *Jesus* sake. We have 'this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency 'of the power may be of *God* and not of us †. 'We are not sufficient to think any thing as of 'ourselves, but all our sufficiency is of *God* thro' '*Christ*. Who is *Paul*, or who is *Apollos*, but 'ministers by whom ye believed, even as the *Lord*

* Ps. xxiii.

† 2 Cor. iv. 5. 7.

‘gave to every man. I planted and Apollos watered; but neither is he that planteth any thing, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the encrease *.’ Now if the apostles themselves claimed no authority, nor boasted any ability of their own, much less can their successors do it, who are so much their inferiors:—Nor do the wisest and best of ministers make any such pretence. They esteem it a sufficient honour—an honour, of which they confess themselves unworthy, to be the servants of Christ, and with humility acknowledge him as their master. They do not indeed call any *man* master upon earth; but *one* is their master, even *Christ*, to whom they meekly bow, and in whom they glory, as the chief shepherd of the flock, and as the shepherd of *their* souls.

It is he that calls them to their office; from him they receive their commission and derive their authority. ‘Ye have not chosen me (says he) but I have chosen you, and ordained you to preach the gospel.’ Therefore saith *Paul*, ‘I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who hath counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry.’—It is Christ also that qualifies his ministers for their arduous work: by his holy spirit he endows them with those gifts and graces which are requisite for their comfortable, honourable, and successful discharge of it.—He, who is said to ‘hold the stars in his right hand,’ stations his ministers in what parts of his church soever he pleases, and fixes them over their respective flocks.—He assists, encourages and succeeds them in their work.—And whenever he sees fit, he calls them away from their services on earth, to give an account of themselves to him, and to receive their reward:

* 1 Cor. iii. 7.

For to him, by whom they are employed, are they accountable for the manner in which they have discharged their trust, and from him are they to expect the reward of their labours.

On these accounts may our Lord Jesus Christ be stiled the chief shepherd.—Let us reverence and adore him under this character; and though he is now invisible to us, let us recollect that very interesting truth, which was the subject of our

III. Observation, That *Christ* the chief shepherd will one day *appear*.

Now he carries on the great business of men's salvation by the hidden operations of his providence, by the secret influences of his spirit, and by the instrumentality of his ministering servants, without appearing himself; on which accounts sinners may think him unobservant of their conduct, and saints perhaps may doubt the reality of his care. But there is a day coming, wherein he will fully convince both the one and the other, by revealing himself in all his glory, and in all his grace. Yes! *that* Jesus who once came into our world 'to seek and 'to save the lost sheep of the house of Israel,' will ere long come again: But in a very different manner, and for very different ends. Then he appeared in 'the form of a servant, and was despised and 'rejected of men.' Not aware of the dignity of his character, and the kindness of his intentions, they treated him in the most ignominious and barbarous manner—they even nailed him to the cross. But when he comes again, he will appear like himself—will fully manifest the glory of his person—the dignity of his offices—his universal authority and dominion, to the shame of his enemies, but to the joy and everlasting consolation of his friends.—When he first appeared, it was to *redeem* the world, but when he appears again it will

will be to judge it.—This awful—this delightful event, is what the word of eternal truth most strongly assures us will come to pass. Yea, the Saviour himself hath said, ‘ Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me.’ Accordingly, believers are described as ‘ looking for that blessed hope, even the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.’ To this great event the apostle refers in our text---‘ When the chief shepherd shall appear.’ He does not say *when* that event will take place, for ‘ of that day and hour knoweth no man;’ but he speaks of it as a thing of the most undoubted certainty---Let us briefly consider the *ends* for which the great shepherd will make this grand appearing. And we may observe,

1. That it will be to examine into the state of his flock, and to receive his people to himself.

According to the account which our Lord himself has given us of the proceedings of that solemn day, he, ‘ the son of man will come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him; and before him shall be gathered all nations.’ Every individual of mankind, whether ‘ high or low, rich or poor, small or great,’ learned or illiterate, saints or sinners, ‘ of all nations and kindred, and people and tongues,’ shall be summoned, and *must* appear, before his tribunal. And he, the impartial judge, shall make an exact scrutiny into their conduct, and hereupon ‘ separate them one from another’ (agreeably to the similitude used in our text) ‘ as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. He will set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left *.’ As for those unhappy creatures

* Matt. xxv. 31—33.

who

who have misimproved the advantages they enjoyed under the faithful Shepherds he sent to watch over their souls, especially those that despised and abused his servants, the chief shepherd will highly resent the affront they put upon *him*, and doom them to everlasting destruction. But as for his own people, who 'obeyed them that had the 'rule over them,' who improved in knowledge, and in holiness by their instructions and discipline—those whom he calls 'his sheep,' who 'heard 'his voice and followed him,' he will then publicly acknowledge them as his own, and take them under his own more immediate care. Then will he conduct them to the heavenly Paradise, where they shall no more be exposed to the injuries of this unfavourable climate, nor the dangers of this desert wilderness—where every mental disorder shall be perfectly cured—where every enemy shall be for ever excluded—where the fear of danger shall no more alarm them—where 'they shall 'hunger no more, nor thirst any more,' but find every want richly supplied: for in that better region, the pastures are ever green—there the streams of joy flow perpetual and for ever, and there the saints shall enjoy a perfect, an uninterrupted, an immortal felicity.

2. When Christ the chief shepherd shall appear, he will particularly examine into the conduct of his *under-shepherds*, and reward them according to their works.

Ministers as well as people, are accountable to him, and must at last stand upon an equal footing at his bar. No titles, no reputation, no learning, no accomplishments, no success, shall excuse them from being as strictly dealt with as other men. Then will all men be called to give an account of the manner in which they have improved their

D

respective

respective talents, to him from whom they received them; and then must ministers, among others, give a strict account of theirs. Those of them that have abused, or neglected to improve their talents—that have been unfaithful to their master's trust—that have scattered his flock—that have been the means of seducing and destroying the souls of men, can expect no mercy when the chief shepherd shall appear, but shall be condemned as 'unprofitable and wicked servants' and doomed to aggravated and endless punishment. 'If thou cease to warn the wicked (saith God) the wicked man shall perish in his iniquities, but his blood will I require at thine hands*.' Our blessed Lord has foretold (may we who bear the sacred character † be suitably affected with the awful prediction!) that '*many* in that day will say unto him Lord, Lord! have we not prophesied [or preached] in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? to whom he will profess, I never knew you; depart from me ye that work iniquity‡.' Dreadful day to such indeed! happy for them would their master never appear! But with respect to all his *faithful* ministers, his appearing will be the most delightful event their eyes ever beheld: as will be evident if we consider, what was our last observation,

IV. That then they shall receive a *crown of glory* that fadeth not away.

No work of faith or labour of love, performed for Christ's sake, shall go unrewarded. None of his faithful servants shall 'labour in vain in the Lord.' But at that great day when he comes to

* Ezek. xxxiii. 8.

† Several ministers were present.

‡ Mat. vii. 22, 23.

give each of them the gracious recompence, he will bestow on his faithful ministers a distinguished reward. He hath said ‘ Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life:’ and at that day he will make his promise good. While slothful and wicked pastors receive their deserved sentence, the language addressed to *these* will be — ‘ Well done good and faithful servants, enter into the joy of your Lord. They that have turned many to righteousness (it is said) shall shine as the stars for ever and ever §.’ In the prospect of this felicity the great apostle triumphed at his approaching dissolution: ‘ I have fought a good fight (says he) I have finished my course, and have kept the faith; hence forth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness:’ And every real minister of Christ (how much soever *his* inferior) is warranted, with the same blessed prospect, to triumph too. Our text assures all such, without distinction, that when the chief shepherd—their great master appears, they shall receive a crown of glory, that fadeth not away: His own right hand will place this crown upon their heads. A crown of GLORY! — A crown! which, in magnificence and splendor shall infinitely surpass that which the mightiest monarch on earth ever wore. As for earthly crowns, they are but trifles—mere children’s toys when compared with *this*: They are composed of perishing materials: pearls and diamonds are but refined clay: they must soon lose their lustre, and they, and those that wear them, must mingle with the dust from whence both were taken. But the crown which faithful ministers shall receive, may with propriety be called a crown of *Glory* for many reasons, but especially on account of that one property of it which is men-

§ Dan. xii. 3.

tioned in our text, viz. that it *fadeth not away*. It is a crown which they shall wear as long as *Christ*, who bestows it, shall wear *his*: for he who made them ‘priests and kings,’ has promised that ‘they shall reign with him for ever and ever.’

Let me add; it will be no inconsiderable part of a faithful minister’s felicity, to see his beloved flock follow him to glory. To see a multitude of happy souls, by his means, turned from the error of their ways——saved from sin and death——directed into the way of peace and holiness——and at last conducted by the chief shepherd into the coelestial paradise, must be a circumstance that will add much to his glory and joy. Yea such souls will be the brightest jewels in his heavenly crown. The apostle therefore, addressing his *Philippian* friends, calls them his ‘joy and crown †.’ And to the *Thessalonians* the same apostle says, ‘What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? ye are our glory and joy ‡.’

But I must not enlarge; it is more than time for me to proceed to the *Application* of this discourse.

From what has been said we may see abundant occasion for thankfulness to God for the care that he has taken of his church, and the provision he has made for its welfare. When it pleased him to raise unto himself a church and people from among the apostate race of Adam, he ‘set up one shepherd over them,’ the son of ‘David his servant,’ after the flesh, and his own eternal son; concerning whom he said, ‘He shall be their shepherd *.’ Let us be thankful that he fixed upon one who was in all respects so well qualified for this high office, and who has ever approved himself so faithful to

† Phil. iv. 1.

‡ 1 Th. ii. 19.

* Ezek. xxxiv. 23.

his trust. And let us be thankful too, that, under this chief shepherd, he has been pleased to furnish his church with inferior ‘pastors and teachers’ from among men,——‘men after his own heart, ‘to feed his people with knowledge and understanding ||.’ That besides ‘prophets, apostles, ‘and evangelists, he gave subordinate teachers’ to be continued in his church to the end of time, for ‘the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ‘ministry, for the edifying the body of Christ *.’ From the description which has now been given of a faithful pastor, it appears, that such are great blessings. Think of the poor heathen, who are as lost sheep wandering in the wilderness——think of the many and large congregations in this christian land, who are under the care of ignorant, negligent shepherds, and then you will have a more just idea of their felicity, who are favoured with wise and able and faithful ones.

This has been the felicity of this christian society. I affectionately congratulate you (my friends) upon it, and now call upon you for thankfulness to God for it. You have been singularly happy, in that, since you were a church, you have never been long destitute of a pastor, and that you have always had such as I have been describing, who have watched over you with diligence——who have fed you with wholesome food——who have kept you together in unity and peace——who have gone in and out before you in a manner becoming the gospel——and I add——who have been long continued with you †. Often recollect with gratitude

|| Jer. iii. 15.

* Eph. iv. 10, 11.

† Since the time of that worthy and useful man, Mr. *John Bunyan*, (so well known in the world as the author of the *Pilgrim’s Progress*, and who died in the year 1688) the church at Bedford has had only three Pastors. Mr. *Willson*, who succeeded him, was succeeded by the Rev. Mr.

tude to the chief shepherd his kindness to you herein; and oh see to it that you 'do not receive this 'grace in vain.' Humble yourselves before God, that your improvement has been no more proportioned to the advantages you enjoyed under your pious ministers; and, now they are gone, remember their counsels, their examples, and their prayers!

Under your late worthy and venerable pastor, whose remains we have this night been committing to the dust, you enjoyed many peculiar advantages. You know how near your interests lay to his heart; and how tenderly he was concerned for your immortal welfare—how faithfully he reproved, admonished and warned you—how kindly he instructed, advised and comforted you—how many friendly hints he has given you in private—and how many affectionate addresses he has made you from the place where I now stand. But ah! he is gone! and will address you no more! The mournful garb in which this pulpit is deckt reminds you, that he who so often occupied it, and so much to your satisfaction, has deserted it for ever. His eyes are closed in death—his lips sealed in everlasting silence—his body, cold and lifeless, confined within the narrow limits of the grave.—The chief shepherd has called him from his flock.—Ask yourselves, sirs! to what purpose he laboured among you, and what advantage you

Mr. *Ebenezer Chandler*, about the beginning of this century: A man of a worthy character, whose ministry was remarkably successful, and under whom the congregation so much encreased, as to require a larger Meeting-house to be erected. In the year 1737, Mr. *Sanderson* went to *Bedford*, as an assistant to him, and was ordained as Co-pastor with him, May 14, 1740. But some years before Mr. *Chandler's* death the whole pastoral charge devolved upon him, which he continued to execute as long as he lived.

gained

gained under his ministry. Some of you, I trust, have been converted from sin to holiness thereby, of whom it may be said, you 'were born here.' Many of you I doubt not have, by his ministry, been instructed, comforted, and established in your most holy faith. *You* will, you must remember your deceased pastor with joy and gratitude as long as you live—yes, you will remember him, and rejoice with him for ever.

But I fear there are others among you who have sat under his ministry in vain. Some of you perhaps 'have despised his counsels, and mocked at his reproofs;' who, instead of having been converted to God by his preaching, are rather hardened in sin. And are there not *many* of you, notwithstanding all his warnings and entreaties, still in an unregenerate, unholy condition? Your folly and your guilt are beyond expression great. Hereby you have not only grieved the heart of your pastor, but highly offended the *chief shepherd* himself, who sent him to you for your salvation. He is now indeed gone from you, and cannot give you the reproof which your sin deserves. But remember that the *chief shepherd* himself will soon appear! that then he will call you to an account for your abuse of your spiritual privileges—yes, and he will call your minister to witness against you. O think how you will then appear before him, and what account you will be able to give! At the same time that *he* receives his *crown*, you will receive the irreversible sentence of condemnation:—I mean unless you repent; which, blessed be God, you may yet do. God now calls you to it, by his word, and by his providence—by that awful providence which has taken your minister from you. Hear his voice and obey it. May God incline your hearts to it, and make the death of your minister the means of spiritual life to your souls!

Be

Be entreated now to remember the warnings and the exhortations he gave you, before that awful period arrives, when you shall remember them in vain——when you shall remember them to your eternal sorrow and shame. *Now* consider him as loudly calling to you from the *grave*, before you yourselves come thither. O hear him from the mansions of the DEAD, though you would not hear him before. If you are so wise, he will one day rejoice over you among others of his converts, and when *he* receives *his* crown, *you* shall receive a crown of glory too. Permit me, who now stand where he has often stood (with respect to *you*) in vain, to plead with you in his stead——permit me to plead with you ‘in CHRIST’s stead to be reconciled unto God.’ It is one important branch of our office who minister in holy things, to negotiate a reconciliation between God and sinners; and here we cannot but be importunate with you, because we know that your eternal interests are so nearly concerned herein. We would not wish to receive our heavenly crowns alone, but long to have you partake with us in this our honour and felicity. For *our* sakes then, but especially for *your own* sakes, hear us, before your day of grace is finished, when this joyful sound of reconciliation shall reach your ears no more for ever.

Let me now address a few words to the *younger* part of this society. Seriously attend, my dear friends, to the daily instances of mortality, of which you are the spectators, especially to that very affecting one which we are now called to improve; and be induced by all to ‘remember your creator in ‘the days of your youth.’ On *you* the future prosperity of this society must greatly depend: for *you* therefore your dear pastor offered his most fervent prayers——to *you* he addressed himself with peculiar tenderness and affection——on *you* he grounded his

his

his most pleasing expectations——and, let me tell you, for *you* he was particularly concerned upon his dying bed. O take heed that his exhortations, his prayers and his hopes be not entirely frustrated.

As for you, my brethren, who stand related to one another in the communion of this church, and especially those of you on whose care and management the welfare of the church and congregation most depends, let me beg of you also to ‘suffer the word of exhortation.’ Do you likewise remember your pastor’s faithful advice, and ‘let your conversation be as becometh gospel of Christ.’ Remember especially his exhortations to brotherly love, peace and unity; and imitate the example he set you to enforce his precepts. ‘Be of one mind and one heart;’ bear and forbear with one another; ‘walk in love and in peace, and believe it, the God of love and peace will be with you.’

In losing your pastor, you have sustained an unspeakable loss; but if you rightly improve it, it will be your gain: Let this be your serious concern, and the matter of your fervent prayers. Be not too sorrowful on account of his departure; for though it might have been good for you that he should have abode longer in the flesh, it was far better for him to depart, because he is now with *Christ*——he is gone to receive his heavenly crown. And remember, that though your shepherd is dead, CHRIST the CHIEF shepherd still lives, and that he ‘is the same yesterday, to-day and for ever†.’ While he is your shepherd you shall not want. Look up to him to provide you again (who has formerly done it) with a ‘pastor after his own heart.’ He is not only an almighty, but a compassionate shepherd. Read that instance of his

† Heb. xiii. 8.

tenderness in the days of his flesh, recorded by the evangelist Matthew †, and take encouragement from it: ‘ When he saw the multitude, he was ‘ moved with compassion on them, because they ‘ were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd.’ If you duly look to and confide in him, he will have the like compassion on *you*, and not suffer you long to be destitute of one.

Let it afford you yet further consolation, under your present loss, to reflect—that very soon the *chief shepherd* himself will *appear*, when his churches will need these his servants no longer, but will be more immediately under the Saviour’s own cognisance and care. And remember too, that at *that* day you shall meet your beloved pastor again; and that then you will mutually contribute to each other’s joy, and add a mutual lustre to each other’s crown.

It might naturally be expected that, before I conclude this sermon, I should enter into the particulars of *his* character whose death occasioned it: but these would of themselves furnish materials for a whole, and an edifying discourse: And I am sorry to say, that this I cannot attempt without violating the will of the deceased; for such were his modesty and humility (virtues which constitute an amiable character) that he desired *no* character might, on this occasion, be given him. But why need I regret this circumstance?—He was too well known, in this town especially, to need a panegyric from me—most of you, I am persuaded have a much higher idea of him; than any thing I could say would be able to give you. All of you have heard—most of you *know*, how he acted in the capacities of a neighbour, a friend, an husband, and a christian; and you of this society,

† Mat. ix. 36.

in particular, well know how he conducted himself as a minister of the gospel—with what dignity, and yet with what ease he conversed with you—with what fervency and propriety he prayed with you and for you—with what seriousness, and at the same time, with what freedom of speech and happy familiarity he preached to you the doctrines and the duties of religion—not in the words of man's wisdom, but in that plainness of language, and simplicity of manner, which best become the servants of a crucified master. Nor are you ignorant how strongly his example enforced the doctrines he taught.—How he *lived*, you must—you *do* know, far better than I can tell you. How he *died*, you will naturally desire to hear—I may add, you can easily guess: And I have the happiness of being able to assure you, he died as he had lived; that is, like a Christian, and like a Minister of Jesus. He ended his course in that manner in which the apostle *Paul* was so desirous of ending *his*, when he said, 'Neither count I my life dear unto me, so that I may finish my course with joy:' On which words he preached (a remarkable circumstance) the very last time he appeared in this place. He bore his illness with great patience and resignation to the Divine Will; often repeating those words of *Job*, 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him;' and those of *Paul*, 'These light afflictions which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory.' He told me "he blessed God, he was not slavishly afraid of death, nor yet greatly desirous of living;" and added, "that was he permitted to choose for himself, he would refer it to God, and say, Lord, not as I will, but as thou wilt."—He conversed, almost to the last, with great freedom, with those

about him, much to their edification * ; and prayed with great fervency—not so much for himself, as for the world, this kingdom, the church of Christ, and his particular friends. Even in his *delirium*, which seized him but a little before his death, he discovered this benevolence of heart, and plainly indicated what was the main bent of his soul. He was, in a more particular manner, concerned for the interests of this society, in which he said he had laboured many years, with great pleasure, and not without some success.—He died (and he desired that you might know he did) in the same faith he preached to you ; and felt the power of those blessed truths he had embraced and defended, in supporting and comforting his soul, when nothing else could do it. Under the influence of these, he met the last enemy with courage and with joy ; committing his soul afresh into the hands of that divine redeemer, who, he said, he was persuaded, was not only able but willing to keep what he had committed to his care. He continued in prayer till his breath was exhausted, and then ‘ departed in peace, ‘ and fell asleep in JESUS †.’

May

* It was at first proposed to print, along with this discourse, what some friends of the deceased committed to writing, together with what the author recollects, of the things he said to those about him during his illness ; which would, indeed, have been the most useful and edifying part of the present publication : But such was his settled aversion to having any thing of his appear in print, that his nearest relations thought, they could not justify themselves in giving their consent to it, as they apprehended it would be contrary to the will of the dead.

† Mr. *Sanderfon* was born at *Sheffield* in *Yorkshire*. He had his Grammar-learning under Mr. *Clarke* of *Hull* ; and begun his Academical studies under the Rev. Mr. *Jolly* at *Attercliff*, which he finished under the Rev. Mr. *Eames*, F. R. S. After the course of his education was completed, he

May we all so live!—may we all so die!—
Hear, brethren, on this solemn occasion, the apostle's
exhortation

he resided some time, as Chaplain, in the house of ———
Birch, Esq; Curfitor Baron of the Exchequer; occasionally preaching in and about *London*. About the year 1732, he was chosen assistant to the Rev. Mr. *Wood*, at the *Weigh-house* in *East-cheap*; from whence he went to *Bedford*; where he was universally respected among persons of the Established Church, as well as Dissenters, on account of that prudence, candor, humility and sweetness of temper, which were such bright ornaments of his piety, and which seldom fail to abate the prejudices and secure the esteem of bigots of all parties, and even of the profane themselves, as well as to strengthen the bonds of brotherly love and christian communion. He always expressed great satisfaction in his situation at *Bedford*, as indeed he had good reason to do, not only on account of his connexions with an amiable family there, and the general respect he met with in the town, but the very considerable success which attended his ministerial labours. Under him the church and congregation continued in a very flourishing condition; and notwithstanding a diversity of sentiments about the circumstantial of religion, have, by his prudence and good temper (under the providence of God) been happily preserved from those sad divisions which have grievously reduced many once respectable societies, and greatly weakened the Dissenting interest. —
Mr. *Sanderson* was constantly attentive to the duties of his station, very seldom absenting himself from his flock. He constantly preached twice on the Lord's day, besides a lecture every *Tuesday* evening through the winter season; and in the summer he always catechised the children of his congregation; for which exercise he had a most happy talent, which he improved for very valuable purposes. Being blessed with a good constitution, he was very seldom, till of late, interrupted in his public work, in which he engaged with so much pleasure, that he would not suffer a small matter to detain him from it; and has sometimes been known to preach (through fear of incurring the charge of indolence) when the state of his health seemed to require him to desist. The disorder which proved fatal to him, was a nervous fever, by which he was confined but eight days, and debarred from his public work only one sabbath; in which respect his wishes were fulfilled; for he always desired that he might not live

exhortation to the Hebrews †: ‘Remember them
 ‘that have (*bad*) the rule over you; who have
 ‘spoken to you the word of God; whose faith
 ‘follow, considering the end of their conversation.
 ‘Let us all become followers of them, who through
 ‘faith and patience now inherit the promises.’ And
 as the great ‘Lord of the harvest’ is continually
 removing one and another of his faithful servants to
 receive their reward, let us pray that he would
 ‘send forth other faithful labourers’ in their stead.
 Let us who survive our fellow labourers in our mas-
 ters service, engage your prayers (christians) that
 we may well fill up their places. And let us (my
 reverend brethren) who sustain the pastoral office,
 be concerned more fully to answer the character of a
 faithful pastor which has now been described. Let
 us be quickened in every part of our work by such
 awful providences as remove our brethren in the
 service of the gospel from us, and by their exem-

live beyond his usefulness.—Filled with zeal for his
 Master’s cause, he encouraged several young men to under-
 take the ministerial office: Those of them that were neces-
 sitous, he himself prepared for the Academy by giving
 them grammar-learning, and supported them there by
 raising contributions among his friends, which he encour-
 aged by his own. Some of them he lived to see settled in
 the world; in whose ordination he engaged with great
 satisfaction, rejoicing over them as a father over his chil-
 dren. May they never forget the frequent, serious ex-
 hortations he gave them—the earnest prayers he offered to
 God for them—the amiable pattern he set before them—
 and the strong, repeated proofs he gave of his concern for
 their welfare, and their usefulness in the church of Christ!
 —As for those who came more lately under his care,
 and who have not yet finished their studies, it is hoped that
 his friends who have contributed to their support, will
 continue their kindness to them, out of respect to their
 worthy Patron; and that fresh benefactors will, in some
 measure, repair the loss they have sustained by his death,
 though it is in some views irreparable.

† Ch. xiii. 7.

plary

plary and joyful deaths, be animated to copy their virtues and lead their lives, and to do as much for Christ and the souls of men as they did: remembering that very soon *we* also must be called, as they now are, to render up our accounts to the chief Shepherd.—God grant that we ‘ may be found of ‘ him in peace at his coming!—that when Christ ‘ who is our life, shall appear, we’ and the dear people of our charge ‘ may appear with him in ‘ GLORY,’ to congratulate each other on receiving our heavenly CROWNS. Amen.

The H Y M N.

[From Dr. DODDRIDGE, N^o. XVII.]

NOW let our mourning hearts revive,
And all our tears be dry.
Why should those eyes be drown’d in grief
Which view a Saviour nigh ?
What tho’ the arm of conquering Death
Does God’s own house invade ?
What tho’ the Prophet and the Priest
Be number’d with the dead ?
Tho’ *earthly Shepherds* dwell in dust,
The aged, and the young,
The watchful eye in darkness clos’d,
And mute th’ instructive tongue ;
Th’ *eternal Shepherd* still survives
New comfort to impart ;
His eye still guides us, and his voice
Still animates our heart.
“ Lo, I am with you,” saith the Lord,
“ My church shall safe abide ;
“ For I will ne’er forsake my own,
“ Whose souls in me confide.”
Through every scene of life and death,
This Promise is our trust ;
And *this* shall be our children’s song
When we are cold in dust.

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